

Godward Submission in the Workplace part 2  
Excursus on Isaiah 52:13-53:12 part 1  
(Isaiah 52:13-53:6)

Introduction: How do we know this section pertains to Jesus? Philip and Luke said so (Acts 8:26-35), Paul said so (Romans 10:14-17) and Jesus said so (Luke 22:37). In 1096 AD, Jewish commentators began to teach this passage referred to their nation and not their Messiah. What caused the change of interpretation? The slaughter of Jews by the “Christian” Crusaders. However, many Orthodox Jews still see this as a reference to Messiah.

This portion of Scripture is comprised of 5 sections of 3 verses each (52:13-15; 53:1-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12); the first and last sections address His **exaltation**, the second and fourth sections address His **suffering**, while the 3<sup>rd</sup> (middle) addresses His **atoning death**. We will address the first 3 sections today.

It is the most frequently quoted OT passage in the NT (7 direct quotes, over 30 allusions or parallels). This is the background passage to 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:21-25.

1) His Exaltation—52:13-15

a) The Messiah’s work will be successful—52:13

i) His WISDOM will be obvious—*My Servant will be insightful*;

(1) The Aramaic Targum [paraphrase from the early 100’s AD] reads “my servant the Messiah”

(2) Refers to His restoration of Yahweh’s people (52:1-12). He will both know and do what is necessary to accomplish the Father’s purpose.

ii) His EXALTATION will be obvious—*He will be elevated and lifted up, and will be extremely high*.

(1) This list of 3 synonyms emphasizes the degree to which He will be exalted.

(a) Remember same words from Isaiah 6:1 “elevated and lifted up”. Used also in 33:10 and 57:15, always of God.

(b) It is not right before God to exalt anyone or anything but God (Isaiah 2:11-17).

(2) Not “in spite of” but “because of” His substitutionary suffering and death

b) A double astonishment at Messiah—52:14-15

i) Astonished at His SUFFERING—<sup>14</sup> ***Just as many*** (individuals) ***were appalled at you***—

• Their shock from looking at Him was not without reason

(1) *thus His appearance was a disfigurement from the human*

(a) Hebrew word for “disfigure” is used of thorough devastation, often because of Divine judgment

(2) *and His form from the sons of man*—

ii) Astonished at His EXALTATION—<sup>15</sup> ***thus/so also He will startle many*** (Gentile) *nations*.

- Some translate “startle” as “sprinkle” but the language and context support “startle”; the LXX translates it as “to wonder at”
  - Their response will be one of shocked silence: “It was through His suffering that He is exalted? How can that be?”
  - (1) *Kings* (of the Gentile nations) *will shut their mouths because of Him,*
    - (a) *because that which had not been told them they see,*
    - (b) *and that which they have not heard they understand.*
  - (2) “The speechless astonishment, at what is unheard and inconceivable, changes into adoring homage, as soon as they have become familiar with it.”
  - (3) The Gentiles find the humiliation of the Messiah shocking because they have never heard before that the Messiah conquers sin on behalf of all humanity through His own personal loss.
- 2) His suffering—53:1-3
- a) The Messiah’s message is rejected—53:1
    - Two rhetorical questions concerning Yahweh message of His exaltation
    - i) <sup>1</sup> *Who has believed what we (Israel) have heard?*
      - (1) Expressing their shock at hearing the news of His suffering and exaltation (52:14-15). They had never heard of a Deliverer who would willingly suffer on behalf of those He was about to deliver. The problem is not the clarity (or the lack thereof) of the report.
      - (2) This is not the report that we have given to others.
    - ii) *And to whom has the arm of Yahweh been revealed?*
      - (1) Has anyone seen such a display of God’s power in the Servant’s ministry?
    - iii) The answer is not an absolute “no one”, but rather a relative “no one” because **some** do believe and **some** have seen God’s power demonstrated.
      - (1) However, no one will believe unless the Spirit of God moves in their heart.
      - (2) The fewness of followers is no disgrace to a person or doctrine.
  - b) The Messiah Himself is rejected and considered insignificant—53:2-3
    - i) Insignificant in His ORIGIN—53:2a <sup>2</sup> *Then He will grow up ...*
      - (1) *like the young plant before Him,*
        - (a) Hopelessly weak
        - (b) The world wants a dominating, forceful, attractive deliverer with magnetism.
      - (2) *and like the root out of dry ground;*
        - (a) Its survival is in question.
    - ii) Insignificant in His external APPEARANCE—53:2b—*He has ...*
      - (1) *no form or splendor/magnificence that we will look at Him*

- (a) Remember how **Joseph** was good looking (Genesis 39), **Saul** was handsome and taller than his peers (1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 9) and **David** was physically attractive (1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 16).
- (2) *and no special appearance that we will desire Him.*
  - (a) His true identity was visible only to the discerning eye of faith.
- (3) It is interesting that the congregations before Constantine's time (313 AD) pictured Jesus as repulsive, but afterwards picture Him as the ideal beauty.
- (4) For those who simply want to scan the surface, He is unimpressive. We need hearts that are awakened in order to look beneath the surface—1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:7
- iii) Insignificant in PEOPLE'S REACTION TOWARD HIM—53:3—<sup>3</sup> *He is ...*
  - (1) Fourfold description of this rejection
    - (a) *despised and rejected by men,*
      - (i) Considered worthless and unworthy of attention, the opposite of honor
      - (ii) By His countrymen—John 1:11-13; By Peter—John 18:15-18, 25-27; By all his disciples—Mark 14:50
    - (b) *a Man of sorrows/afflictions and One knowing suffering,*
      - (i) Sorrows—any pain, physical or emotional (see sorrows in 53:4)
      - (ii) Suffering—weakness, fatigue, exhaustion (see grief in 53:4, 10)
    - (c) *and as one from whom they hide their faces He was despised,*
      - (i) Considered worthless and unworthy of attention, one to avoid
    - (d) *and we did not respect Him.*
      - (i) An acknowledgment of guilt of not regarding Him with the value and honor that was due Him
      - (ii) See their evaluation of Him in 53:4 “stricken” because of His own sin
  - (2) The concept is that of a terminally ill patient that others shun. He is perceived as a pathetic loser foolishly attempting to deliver other losers.
    - (a) Remember Him before His incarnation. He existed in the form of God and all the attendant glory due Him. See Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 1:3.
- 3) His atoning work—53:4-6
  - a) The Messiah's work misunderstood—53:4
    - i) <sup>4</sup> *Surely* (with certainty)
      - (1) The remnant of Israel looked at the suffering Messiah and now they acknowledge that they had drawn the wrong conclusions in 53:1-3
  - ii) The Messiah's work observed—and the consequences of our sin
    - (1) *our sufferings He lifted up,*
      - (a) Same Hebrew word as in Leviticus 16:22 regarding carrying the iniquity of others

- (b) The animal died not merely because Israel had sinned, but in Israel's place.
- (2) *and **our** sorrows **He** carried;*
  - (a) He carries what is not His own.
- (3) See these two verbs again in 53:11-12 in relationship to carrying sin.
- iii) The Messiah's work interpreted
  - (1) *yet **we** reckoned **Him**...* to justly deserve His suffering
    - (a) *stricken*, (punished)
      - (i) Jerome's Vulgate translated this as "leprosum", i.e. afflicted with leprosy; the Talmud (Jewish commentary) also says Messiah was a leper (Sanhedrin 98a).
      - (b) *smitten* (attacked) *of* (by) *God*
      - (c) *and afflicted* (humbled?).
    - (2) The Jewish philosopher and rabbi Maimonides (1137-1204) stated Jesus deserved the violent death he suffered.
  - iv) But Jesus was stricken because **we** are sinners; He was smitten by God because **we** are sinners; He was afflicted because **we** are sinners.
    - (1) "The refusal of humanity to bow to the Creator's rule, and our insistence on drawing up our own moral codes that pander to our lusts, are not shortcomings or mistakes. ...Someone has taken on himself the results of our rebelliousness, and we have been given the keys of the kingdom."
- b) Messiah's work is real—<sup>5</sup> *But ...* (the misinterpretation is corrected)
  - i) Literally—***He** was fatally wounded* (pierced) *because of **our** rebellion;*
    - Rebellion, not merely mistakes or shortcomings.
  - ii) Figuratively—***He** was crushed because of **our** iniquities;*
    - Pulverized, not merely bruised (see also 53:10).
    - Iniquity is a perversion of what is right.
  - iii) Negatively—*the corrective discipline of* (purpose) ***our** peace* [shalom] *was upon **Him**,*
    - Peace vertically with God, peace horizontally with people, and peace internally with our souls.
  - iv) Positively—*and by* (through) ***His** wounds **we** have been healed.*
    - Messiah is not suffering with His people—He is suffering for them.
  - v) Additional thoughts on substitutionary punishment:
    - "A righteous God, in order to forgive sinners, must base it on moral ground. Otherwise forgiveness would be morally objectionable and spiritually meaningless, as there would be no difference between righteousness and wickedness. But God is not only merciful but also righteous."
    - The One who was pierced, crushed, and wounded is the One through whom we are healed.
- c) Messiah's work is effective—53:6
  - ii) The miserable problem

- i) Collectively—<sup>6</sup> ***All of us like sheep have wandered off;***
    - (1) Straying is characteristic of sheep and people (Psalm 58:3).
    - (2) Everyone in the world is sinful and a sinner
      - (a) Because of Adam's guilt—Romans 5:12, 14, 19
      - (b) Because of our inherited sin nature—Psalm 51:5; Romans 8:7; Colossians 1:21
      - (c) Because of our lack of righteousness and willingness to do right—Romans 3:23; John 5:40; Matthew 23:37
  - ii) Individually—***each of us has turned to his own*** (not God's) *way*;
  - iii) God's solution through Messiah
    - i) The author—***and Yahweh***
    - ii) The nature of the action—***has laid on Him*** (Christ) *the iniquity*
    - iii) The recipients—***of us all***.
  - d) Messiah suffered not simply *because of* Israel's sin, but as an efficacious and substitutionary (vicarious) remedy *for* their guilt.
  - e) We are in desperate need of a Redeemer. The mercy we desperately need must come from the God whom we have offended. If He does not forgive us, no one can.
- 4) Looking back: This also relates to our work situations, as Peter says:
- a) Work hard, work well, to the benefit of others
  - b) You may be misunderstood as you work
  - c) Work may be, because of the Fall, unpleasant and difficult at times.
  - d) Your ultimate reward is not at your workplace but in the future
- 5) **Take-home truth:**
- a) Have you trusted the God you offended? He is the God who forgives (Psalm 86:5)
  - b) Are you glorifying God in your workplace?

Next time, we will look at the last 2 sections in Isaiah 53:7-12.